

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10
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AMCONSUL HONG KONG
INS WASHDC
AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 8817

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF
SUBJECT: RTG REFUGEE POLICY

REF: BANGKOK 7556

1. LESLIE A. GOODYEAR, UNHCR REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR WESTERN SOUTH ASIA, CALLED ON AMBASSADOR WHITEHOUSE MARCH 22. GOODYEAR HAD JUST RETURNED FROM A FIVE DAY TRIP TO SEVERAL REFUGEE SITES IN THAILAND. HIS HOSTS AND COMPANIONS FOR THE TRIP WERE SISAK THAMMARAK, DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF INTERIOR; AND KAMON PRACHUABMO, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, DISPLACED PERSONS OPERATIONS CENTER.

2. GOODYEAR SAID THAT THE RTG HAS COME TO THE REALIZATION THAT ITS NOVEMBER 15 EXCLUSIONARY POLICY IS NOT WORKING. ONE OF HIS FIELD REPRESENTATIVES HAD OBTAINED A COPY OF A LETTER TO THE NAN GOVERNOR WHICH THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR HAD ALSO SENT TO SEVERAL OTHER GOVERNORS. THE LETTER INDICATED THAT POST-NOVEMBER 15 ARRIVALS COULD ENTER THE UNHCR-SUPPORTED CAMPS FOR
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PURPOSES OF FAMILY REUNION IF THEY HAD RELATIVES THERE. THOSE INDIVIDUALS WHOM THE RTG DETERMINED WERE BONA FIDE POLITICAL REFUGEES COULD ALSO GO THERE. OTHER INDIVIDUALS WHO HAD NO CRIMINAL OR SECURITY RECORDS WOULD GO TO ONE OF THE THREE NEW CENTERS THAT THE RTG HAD CONSTRUCTED OR WAS CONSTRUCTING TO HOUSE THEM. (THE CENTERS ARE LOCATED IN CHIENG RAI, NAKHON PHANOM,

AND BURIRAM.) THE NAN GOVERNOR TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE INSTRUCTION TO MOVE ALL OUT-OF-CAMP REFUGEES IN HIS PROVINCE INTO UNHCR-SUPPORTED CAMPS THERE.

3. GOODYEAR SAID THAT THE RTG WAS ALSO HAVING QUALMS, PRINCIPALLY FINANCIAL, ABOUT THE THREE NEW CENTERS. CONSTRUCTION WAS COMPLETED IN CHIENG RAI AND NAKHON PHANOM, AND THE CENTERS WERE ALMOST LUXURIOUS. THE RTG HAD NO FUNDS FOR MAINTAINING THEM, HOWEVER, AND NO MONEY TO REIMBURSE THE CONTRACTORS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION (BANGKOK 5762). A CABINET DECISION WAS NEEDED ON THE PROBLEM.

4. IN BURIRAM, HIS TRAVELING COMPANIONS HINTED THAT THEY WOULD LIKE THE UNHCR TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CAMBODIAN REFUGEES THERE. GOODYEAR EXPLAINED TO THEM THAT HE WAS NOT PREPARED TO PAY FOR ANY PROGRAM WHICH WOULD FACILITATE THE FORCED REPATRIATION OF REFUGEES TO CAMBODIA. HE HAD TOLD THE THAI HOWEVER, THAT IF THEY WOULD ASSURE THAT THE CAMBODIANS WERE IN NO DANGER OF RETURN, THE UNHCR WOULD PICK UP THE BILL FOR THEIR MAINTENANCE IN THAILAND. GOODYEAR EXPECTS THE RTG TO MAKE SIMILAR APPROACHES ON THE OTHER TWO CENTERS.

5. GOODYEAR SAID THAT THE ONLY MAJOR CONFRONTATION THAT HE HAD WITH HIS HOSTS DURING THE TRIP OCCURRED IN CHIENG CONFIDENTIAL

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RAI. A LOCAL GUIDE LED THEM TO A JAIL WHERE THERE WERE EIGHT REFUGEES, APPARENTLY YAO, DESTINED FOR REPATRIATION TO LAOS. SOMEONE MENTIONED THAT THE 12 REPATRIATED THE PREVIOUS DAY HAD ALL BEEN KILLED ON THE LAO SIDE OF THE BORDER. TO KAMON'S CONSTERNATION, GOODYEAR GOT SISAK INVOLVED WITH THE EIGHT, AND TOLD SISAK THAT HE STRONGLY OPPOSED THEIR REPATRIATION. AT KAMON'S PROMPTING, SISAK REPLIED, ON THIS AND EARLIER OCCASIONS, THAT CONSIDERATIONS OF "NATIONAL SECURITY" HAD TO BE PARAMOUNT. GOODYEAR NEVERTHELESS FELT THAT HIS PRESENCE MAY HAVE RESCUED THE EIGHT FROM REPATRIATION. WE ARE ASKING THE CONSUL IN CHIENG MAI TO FOLLOW UP ON THIS ISSUE.

6. GOODYEAR AND THE AMBASSADOR DISCUSSED THE POSSIBILITIES OF LOCAL RESETTLEMENT IN THAILAND. THE AMBASSADOR COMMENTED THAT THE US HAD HEARD NOTHING FROM THE RTG ON THIS TOPIC FOR SOME TIME. GOODYEAR SAID THAT THE RTG HAD APPROACHED THE BRITISH ON POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTIONS TO LOCAL SETTLEMENT.

7. THE AMBASSADOR BROUGHT UP THE RECENT INFLUX OF HMONG INTO NONG KHAI PROVINCE. HE COMMENTED THAT THE VOLUN-

TARY AGENCIES SEEMED TO BE DOING AN EXCELLENT JOB OF PROVIDING THEM TEMPORARY RELIEF. HE ASKED WHAT THE UNHCR MIGHT DO. GOODYEAR REPLIED THAT THE UNHCR COULD NOT GET INTO A FEEDING PROGRAM FOR THESE INDIVIDUALS UNTIL THE RTG CLASSIFIED THEM AS REFUGEES NOT SUSCEPTIBLE TO FORCED REPATRIATION.

8. THE AMBASSADOR ASKED WHETHER UNHCR FUNDS COULD BE DISPENSED DIRECTLY TO SOLVE SOME OF THE WATER PROBLEMS IN THE CAMPS, PARTICULARLY NONG KHAI (BANGKOK 7765). GOODYEAR REPLIED THAT HE AND HIS TRAVELLING COMPANIONS HAD AGREED THAT WATER IS A PROBLEM IN ALL THE CAMPS, BUT THE UNHCR MUST FUNNEL ITS MONETARY GRANTS THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR. HE MENTIONED, HOWEVER, THAT THE DUTCH AMBASSA-
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DOR HAS MONEY AT HIS DISPOSAL FOR SUCH PURPOSES; AND GOODYEAR WOULD LOOK INTO WHAT COULD BE DONE TO SPUR ACTION.

WHITEHOUSE

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